United Nations E/CN.18/2004/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 March 2004

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Fourth session
Geneva, 3-14 May 2004
Item 4 (a)(iv) of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of the proposal for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the plan of action of the United Nations Forum on Forests: progress in implementation: monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions

Monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) related to monitoring, assessment and reporting and concepts, terminology and definitions call for: improving national forest assessments and information dissemination; building capacity for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data; improving and streamlining forest-related reporting for international purposes; and achieving a common understanding of forest-related definitions.

There has been steady progress in national forest inventories and assessments, especially in developed countries. The scope of forest information collected has widened, and the dissemination of information has improved. Use of data from satellite images and rolling, or continuous, data collection systems has increased with the development of new technologies. More comprehensive global information on forests and forest management is available, in particular through the global Forest

* E/CN.18/2004/1.

04-25759 (E) 290304

Resources Assessment. However, major gaps in information still exist, and information needs for national and international purposes are increasing. Limited capacity and financial resources in many developing countries constrain the collection, analysis and dissemination of information. Several international bodies are helping to build country capacity, but further efforts are needed.

Under a joint initiative aimed at streamlining forest-related reporting to international processes, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests have reviewed reporting requirements and developed a web portal for easy access to national reports. They propose to develop a common information framework to improve information management, with a view to helping to reduce the reporting burden on countries. Two expert meetings were held in 2002 on harmonization of forest-related definitions, which launched a multi-stakeholder process to harmonize and achieve more consistent use of forest-related definitions. Work continues, including efforts to harmonize core terms in French and Spanish and to clarify terms related to the naturalness of forests, including planted forests, and low forest cover.

The present report provides information on progress and constraints in implementation of related IPF/IFF proposals for action and proposals for the way forward.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–4	3
II.	Background	5–8	3
III.	Progress in implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, and concepts, terminology and definitions	9–36	5
IV.	Means of implementation	37–46	12
V.	Conclusions	47–53	15
VI.	Points for discussion	54	16

I. Introduction

1. The multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests calls for a review of the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) related to monitoring, assessment and reporting and concepts, terminology and definitions at the fourth session of the Forum. Concepts, terminology and definitions were also on the agenda of the second session of the Forum.[1] The present report focuses on implementation of the related IPF/IFF proposals for action and decisions adopted at the second session. The report also discusses the means of implementation, mainly capacity-building related to monitoring, assessment and reporting and some emerging issues.

2. Criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management, a tool used for monitoring, assessment and reporting, among other things, is on the agenda of the fourth session as a separate element. Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to criteria and indicators is dealt with in depth in the report of the Secretary-General prepared for that agenda item (E/CN.18/2004/11) and is therefore not addressed in the present report.

3. Aspects of monitoring, assessment and reporting as a principal function of the Forum[2] will also be addressed at the fourth session under agenda item 5(e), intersessional work, including: (a) the results of the meeting of the Forum's ad hoc expert group on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting (E/CN.18/2004/2) and (b) a proposal for a process to facilitate the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (E/CN.18/2004/12).

4. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) prepared the draft of the present report. Sources of information included: country reports for submission at the fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests that were available at the time of preparation; reports of relevant country-led initiatives and other meetings, including the International Expert Meeting on Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting on the Progress towards Sustainable Forest Management held in Yokohama, Japan, in 2001,[3] the International Conference on the Contribution of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management: The Way Forward, held in Guatemala City, in 2003,[4] the Forum's country-led initiative on lessons learned in monitoring, assessment and reporting on implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, held in Viterbo, Italy, in 2003,[5] and the Expert Consultation on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, held in Cebu City, the Philippines, in 2004;[6] the work of Collaborative Partnership on Forests members on streamlining forest-related reporting and on harmonizing definitions;[7] and additional information from other Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and organizations.

II. Background

5. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests recognized monitoring, assessment and reporting on forests as critical to countries for sound forest planning and policy development. The IPF/IFF proposals for action call for efforts to improve national forest resource assessments and information dissemination, harmonize forest-related definitions, and make forest-

related information and reporting more streamlined, timely, cost-effective and meaningful for decision makers, with a view to reducing the reporting burden on countries.

6. The table below lists and summarizes the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, and concepts, terminology and definitions. The summaries in the table are neither negotiated text nor meant to replace negotiated text; they are provided to facilitate the analysis of the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

Summary of IPF/IFF proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, and concepts, terminology and definitions

Type of action called for	*Proposal(s) for action*
Collection and dissemination of national information on forests Improve national forest resource assessments and make information related to sustainable forest management widely available	IPF 46b, IPF 89b, IFF 17a, IFF 17b
Improved international reporting and information systems on forests Develop improved and streamlined reporting and information systems to assist in the collection, verification, synthesis, interpretation and dissemination of information on progress in sustainable forest management and financial resources to achieve it	IPF 89d, IPF 89e, IPF 115e, IPF 78a, IPF 78b, IPF 78c, IPF 89g, IFF 18, IFF 19a, IFF 30d, IFF 142c
Concepts, terminology and definitions Formulate an internationally acceptable set of definitions of key terms related to forests and forest management, including forest resource assessment, criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management, low forest cover, planted forests and categories of protected areas	IPF 58a, IPF 89f, (IPF 115d), IFF 89, IFF 122a
Means of implementation (capacity-building) Provide assistance to developing countries to strengthen their capacity to collect information and report on forests	IFF 17e, IFF 19b, IFF 17a

7. At its second session, the United Nations Forum on Forests concluded the following points regarding the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action related to concepts, terminology and definitions:

- Reaching a common understanding of forest-related concepts, terminology and definitions is recognized as important to increase the comparability and compatibility of forest data
- Countries are eager to reduce the redundancy and duplication of international reporting requirements
- Development and implementation of national forest programmes and work on criteria and indicators have led to better understanding of concepts, terminology and definitions
- The international dialogue, including the country-led initiative held in Yokohama, Japan,[3] the expert meeting on harmonizing forest-related definitions for use by various stakeholders,[8] and the (then upcoming) 2003 international meeting on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management,[4] are valuable.

8. The following recommendations were adopted at the session:[9]

The Forum:

- Invited Collaborative Partnership on Forests members to build upon their work on fostering a common understanding of concepts, terminology and definitions and submit a progress report on this to the Forum at its third session
- Invited countries and Collaborative Partnership on Forests members to expedite their work on concepts, terminology and definitions regarding low forest cover
- Invited Collaborative Partnership on Forests members to streamline reporting requests and, to the extent possible, synchronize their reporting cycles so as to reduce the reporting burden on countries.

III. Progress in implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, and concepts, terminology and definitions

9. Significant progress has been made in many areas of work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting. These include: improvements in national resource assessments, including widening of the scope of forest-related datasets; continued development and implementation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management; further development of the global Forest Resources Assessment; continued efforts to harmonize forest-related terms and definitions; the launching of an initiative in streamlining forest-related reporting and reducing the reporting burden on countries; and strengthening of country capacity for collecting, analysing and disseminating forest information. More detailed information is provided in the following sections.

A. Trends and emerging issues in implementation of proposals related to the collection and dissemination of information on forests

1. National

10. Countries' efforts to make monitoring, assessment and reporting on forests more cost-effective, efficient and relevant include:

- Making better use of existing data and reporting systems
- Using unconventional methods to collect information, especially from local sources
- Pooling resources from multiple sources, including outside the forest sector
- Sharing concepts, approaches and experiences
- Determining information needs through the national forest programme process
- Separating information needs for forest management from those required for forest policy
- Building closer linkages between national forest assessments, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and national forest programmes
- Improving coordination among national institutions that collect, use or disseminate forest-related information
- Emphasizing systematic monitoring in the field as the basis for gathering information
- Building on the knowledge of countries that have a history of monitoring systematically
- Increasing accessibility and availability of information
- Enhancing stakeholder involvement in monitoring, assessment and reporting at national, regional and global levels.

11. Many countries have made steady progress in the collection of information and statistics in national forest inventories and assessments. The information is used primarily for domestic policy-making, forest management planning, planning forest industry investments and timber procurement, forest research and forest certification, among other things. Increasingly, results are also used for international purposes, such as global and regional analyses and assessments, and for various scientific and policy-relevant reports.

12. A few countries mentioned in their reports submitted at the Forum's fourth session that they had strengthened the linkages between their national forest assessments and inventories, national forest programmes and sets of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. This is a positive development, indicating an effort to more closely link information collection to national policy-making needs, and policy processes to monitoring of progress towards sustainable forest management. However, many countries emphasized the need for more coherent and systematic national monitoring on forests and better access to the latest knowledge on forest management in order to improve forest policy development.

13. In addition to data traditionally collected (e.g. on species and timber volume), many countries are collecting information on new parameters, such as forest health, forest fires, carbon sequestration and non-wood forest products. Attempts are also being made to collect new information related to biodiversity, such as on key habitats, amount and quality of decaying wood, trees left in regeneration cuttings and improved site, soil and landscape descriptions.

14. Satellite imagery has added a new data source for forest mapping and monitoring. Satellite-based land cover inventories can improve the scope of core statistical databases and assist in monitoring changes in land cover. Used in conjunction with ground-based measurements, remote sensing is a useful tool to help determine land-use classification and to identify changes in land cover over time. Interpretation of aerial photography or satellite images can also make field inventory work more efficient. Remote sensing alone is unlikely to provide sufficient information on forest resources to satisfy national forest policy requirements, for which field inventories are also needed.

15. Despite encouraging progress in several areas, many countries, particularly developing countries, still lack reliable information at the national level. An illustration of this is that, in responding to the FAO global Forest Resources Assessment 2000, 61 per cent of developing countries, accounting for 25 per cent of forest area in the developing world, provided information based only on expert opinion or on coarse and inaccurate mapping. Further, while many countries invest in forest inventories, little has been done to assess trees outside forests, even though these resources provide essential products and services, particularly in countries with low forest cover. In addition, limited attention is given by most countries to the collection of information on non-wood forest products and services, although their household use and sale are critically important in many places, particularly for rural people in developing countries. Countries noted in their reports to the United Nations Forum on Forests the need to strengthen knowledge and dissemination of information on forest biological diversity and on economic and social aspects of forests.

16. The quantity and quality of information available depends on countries' ability and willingness to collect it. Data collection must compete for scarce financial resources with many other national priorities. Thus, investments in data collection require careful consideration of what information is essential for decision-making, and it is important that the information collected is used to obvious benefit. The information available is also influenced by the partnerships formed for data collection and the degree to which data are shared. Inventories are sometimes operated as a partnership between the forestry department and private sector, including forest industry and forest owners. Such a collaborative approach fosters willingness of forest owners to provide detailed information on their forest resources.

17. Increased needs for information updated on an annual basis have caused some countries to set up their national forest inventories as rolling systems, where databases are updated and made available once new information is obtained. In such instances, a percentage of the country's plots are measured each year.

18. Use of Internet sites to provide for wide dissemination and easy access to information, including to the public, has been used in several countries with great effectiveness. Democratization has enabled public access to information, but despite

positive changes there are still problems of access to information in many parts of the world. Despite progress in many countries in information dissemination through use of modern information technologies, other countries, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition, still suffer from limitations in information dissemination and access, owing in part to the "digital divide". For some countries, use of national forest inventory information for international purposes may be limited by the fact that it is available only in the national language.

19. Several international organizations, among them FAO, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the World Bank, and bilateral assistance programmes support countries' efforts to improve forest inventories and monitoring. For example, FAO assists countries to carry out national forest assessments through systematic field inventories at sample locations. Data collected includes biophysical measurements and information on the management, uses and users of resources needed for more effective forest planning. Work is ongoing in five developing countries and requests for assistance have been received from about 15 others.

2. International

20. The FAO global Forest Resources Assessment provides information at regular intervals on the world's forest resources, their management and uses, based largely on data provided by countries. The most recent assessment, for 2000, reports on the extent and condition of forests in 212 countries and areas (territories, protectorates, etc.).[10] Intergovernmental partners in the Forest Resources Assessment include the Economic Commission for Europe, ITTO and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). A number of convention secretariats also collaborate. The continued development of global forest assessments is a priority of FAO, which seeks even greater involvement of countries and other international organizations in the process.

21. The Forest Resources Assessment for 2000 will be updated in 2005. It will be structured along the thematic areas (criteria) of sustainable forest management, as recommended by the Kotka IV expert consultation[11] and the 2003 International Conference on the Contribution of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management: The Way Forward, and endorsed by the FAO Committee on Forestry at its sixteenth session, held in March 2003.[12] About 120 national correspondents gathered in Rome in November 2003 to discuss the contents, guidelines and country reporting for the 2005 Forest Resources Assessment update.[13] A work plan for 2004, which includes considerable support to countries and regions, was developed. Participants expressed a need to build national capacity to respond to increased demand for information and echoed the call to reduce the reporting burden on countries and develop a unified, consistent and stable reporting mechanism. With the link made between the Forest Resources Assessment and criteria and indicators, the Assessment data will be more conducive for use as a source of global information on forests and sustainable forest management. The ongoing efforts to harmonize terms and definitions should increase the compatibility of data reported in the Assessment and other international forest-related processes.

B. Trends and emerging issues in implementation of proposals related to streamlining international reporting and information systems

22. Efforts by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests aimed at streamlining forest-related reporting are under way and are yielding results. The initial activities were presented to and were welcomed by the third session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. They include a web-based portal[14] that provides easy access to reporting formats and to national reports submitted to international processes and a review of international forest-related reporting requirements and processes.

23. In late 2003, the Partnership developed a proposal for a common information framework on national reporting to international bodies. The purpose of the information framework is to facilitate access to information that has been provided through national reports to international organizations and instruments. The information would be organized and searchable by themes and key words. Access to systematically organized information would help to facilitate the use of existing information and would assist organizations and instruments in designing requests and preparing reporting schedules for country reporting. The ultimate goal is to reduce the reporting burden on countries. The information framework would help countries to compile and manage information for reporting purposes. Collaborative Partnership on Forests members are willing to continue the development of the framework. However, this would require that adequate support and resources be made available.

24. In addition to these initiatives, progress has been made on joint information requests. A successful example is the Joint Forest Statistics Questionnaire, which is used and continually developed by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), FAO, ITTO and the Economic Commission for Europe. It is aimed at enhancing accuracy and reliability of information on the forest products production, consumption and trade, and reducing the reporting burden on countries. Through the joint questionnaire, which consolidates the data needs of all the partners, countries are asked to provide data on forest products only once, rather than to respond to several questionnaires, as in the past. This example demonstrates that it is indeed an option to issue joint requests for information that is needed by two or more bodies. Making greater use of existing information, such as Forest Resources Assessment data, to fulfil the information needs of various international processes would also ease the reporting burden. In order for such streamlining efforts to be feasible, it would be necessary to further harmonize and consistently use forest-related definitions. Achieving more streamlined forest-related reporting is dependent upon the governing bodies of the organizations and instruments that request forest-related information (e.g. the United Nations Forum on Forests, forest-related conventions and international organizations) to adopt necessary measures in this regard.

25. Convention secretariats and other partners are also working to harmonize national reporting among conventions dealing with biological diversity, with the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre leading the task.[15] Closer collaboration between this exercise and work to streamline forest-related reporting would be desirable.

C. Trends and emerging issues in implementation of proposals related to concepts, terminology and definitions

26. Progress has been made on most of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to concepts, terminology and definitions, although they need to be further harmonized and used more consistently in forest-related reporting. In this regard, efforts continue both through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests[16] and the Forest Resources Assessment. As the Forum requested at its second session, Partnership members reported progress on definitions to the third session through its Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2003 (E/CN.18/2003/INF.1).

27. FAO, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Centre for International Forestry Research, and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations jointly organized an expert meeting in Rome in January 2002 to discuss issues related to concepts, terminology and definitions. This marked the beginning of a multi-stakeholder process to harmonize forest-related definitions and achieve more consistent use with a view to reducing reporting requirements. A second meeting, co-organized by these organizations and UNEP, was held in Rome in September 2002.[17] A comparison was made of how various international processes and instruments define key forest-related terms, including the commonalities and differences between them. The effort stressed that harmonization, not standardization, of definitions was needed, whereby terms are adjusted to improve their compatibility, consistency, comparability, linkages and hierarchies. The next steps in this process includes harmonizing core terms in French and Spanish, and clarifying terms related to naturalness of forests and planted forests.

28. Both expert meetings concluded that differences are minor in the definitions of forest, forest land, forested land, other wooded land, non-forest, reforestation, forest degradation and forest improvement. The terms old-growth forest and semi-natural forest are used in different regions and to mean different things. Terms used inconsistently and requiring new formulations or adaptations include "other land" (land other than that classified as forest and other wooded land), afforestation, deforestation, planted forest, forest rehabilitation, forest restoration, forest fragmentation, secondary forest, trees outside forests and low forest cover.

29. Specific terms and concepts that IPF and IFF requested be clarified are: planted forests, low forest cover, categorization of protected areas, terms and definitions used in criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, and linkages between certification and criteria and indicators. Progress in these areas is described below.

30. *Planted forests*. In response to the IFF call for an international definition of planted forests, the Forest Resources Assessment 2000 adopted a definition of forest plantations that was developed through a process of international consultation in the Forest Resources Assessment Advisory Group and in other forums. However, defining the naturalness of forest, including planted forests, remains a challenge, one that the Assessment and the forest definitions harmonization process are committed to resolve. Definitions for modified natural forests, semi-natural forests, planted forests and plantation forests have been problematic for policy and decision makers, planners and foresters for decades. It is not always possible to distinguish a plantation forest from a natural forest, particularly in temperate and boreal regions,

when it is of mixed species, mixed age, or when it consists of endemic species grown in long rotation. The distinction between plantation forests and natural forests is clearer in plantings of single species, uniform planting densities, even age classes, and stands with short rotation periods and/or intensive management, as often found in tropical and subtropical regions.

31. *Low forest cover*. Many processes, including the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Tehran Process,[18] have called for a definition of low forest cover. UNEP and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations have analysed the issue and suggested that countries be classified according to a combination of variables, which could include the following ratios: forest per capita, forest to total land area, forest and other wooded land to total land area, existing forest area to original forest area; or actual forest area to potential forest area. The feasibility of using composite indices to characterize low forest cover countries needs to be further assessed. Whatever definition of low forest cover is ultimately decided upon, it should be recognized that countries situated in dry zones are often highly sensitive to changes that could move them over the "low forest" threshold and thus frequently change their status of being or not being a low forest cover country. Furthermore, the difficulty of accurately estimating forest area in marginal natural conditions is an issue. Developing ways to increase the accuracy of assessments of vegetation cover in arid zones would be important. This could possibly be done in conjunction with the work carried out under other processes, especially the Forest Resources Assessment and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

32. *Categories of protected forest areas*. The categorization of protected areas developed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is the most widely accepted system for use in global and national reporting. The fifth IUCN World Parks Congress,[19] held in Durban, South Africa, from 8 to 17 September 2003, recommended, among other things, that the IUCN categories of protected areas be further developed and that IUCN strengthen its efforts to promote greater understanding of them at national and international levels. The IUCN categories have been used at the global level as the basis for Forest Resources Assessment 2000 data on forests in protected areas. They have been used at the regional level by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. As a result of difficulties experienced in the collection of data on protected areas in Europe on the basis of the IUCN categories of protected areas, the Fourth Ministerial Conference, held in Vienna, from 28 to 30 April 2003, adopted Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forests and Other Wooded Land in Europe.[20] These guidelines define five classes according to management objectives and interventions. These are linked to the IUCN categories. The Ministerial Conference also agreed on general principles to designate protected areas, which include legal status, long-term commitment and explicit designation.

33. *Terms and definitions in criteria and indicators*. Work is under way to clarify terms and definitions used in criteria and indicators processes. This was specifically discussed in the FAO/ITTO Expert Consultation on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, organized in Cebu City, the Philippines, in March 2004, as a follow-up meeting to the 2003 International Conference on the Contribution of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management.[21] The issue is also addressed in the report of the Secretary-General on criteria and

indicators of sustainable forest management for submission at the fourth session of the Forum (E/CN.18/2004/11).

34. *Certification*. Problems have arisen from inconsistent use of terminology among certification systems and between certification systems and processes of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. Although this is a difficult issue to solve, progress is being made; many certification schemes are using criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management as a basis or reference point for their performance standards.

35. *Afforestation, reforestation and deforestation*. Definitions for afforestation, reforestation, and deforestation have been adopted for use in the global Forest Resources Assessment. Disagreement on what definitions for these terms should be used for the purposes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol has slowed down negotiations within the Convention. The Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties defined the terms forest, afforestation, reforestation, deforestation, and forest management[22] and asked the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to define forest degradation. The Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties established rules and modalities for afforestation and reforestation under the Clean Development Mechanism but, in the end, the parties agreed to revert to previous definitions, given that the one for reforestation presented particular difficulties. In addition, the Ninth Meeting postponed a decision on the definition of forest degradation, opting to invite submissions on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change proposal. The Panel's Good Practice Guidance for Land-use and Forestry contains many forest-related definitions and the Ninth Meeting accepted those parts of the guide that apply to the preparation of National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. However, it postponed a decision on the sections that apply to the Kyoto Protocol until the Tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

36. Various lists of definitions have been developed and contribute to the clarification and consistent use of definitions. These include: FAO's *Unified Wood Energy Terminology*, which major partners and organizations, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Energy Council have adopted,[23] forest biodiversity definitions from the Convention on Biological Diversity;[24] Global Fire Monitoring Centre: Fire Management Glossaries;[25] Adequacy of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Guidelines for reporting national activities under the Kyoto Protocol;[26] and the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre Glossary of Biodiversity Terms.[27] Furthermore, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations clearing house for multilingual forest terminology, Silvavoc,[28] provides bibliographical and consultation services about forest terminologies and terminological activities and contributes to the harmonization and integration of terminology. The International Union has also recently developed a multilingual glossary of carbon-related terminology.

IV. Means of implementation

37. The IPF/IFF proposals for action encouraged developing countries to seek the donor community's assistance for their forest information and reporting efforts, and called upon countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and other relevant organizations to help build capacity in developing countries for periodic

and timely collection, review, synthesis and utilization of information related to sustainable forest management.

38. Most efforts in capacity-building centre on reinforcing technical know-how for collecting and managing data. Activities of international organizations working with countries to strengthen their capacity for forest information management include helping to:

- Strengthen abilities to collect data through national inventories
- Establish analytical functions that can turn data into useful information
- Institutionalize information management and dissemination by developing a system to maintain and update data and to ensure the data's neutrality, transparency, security and access to the public
- Establish long-term policy goals for forest monitoring and assessment.

Success factors include:

- Strong institutions to carry out independent and neutral monitoring, assessment and reporting
- National commitments to provide sufficient resources and responsibilities
- Acknowledgement and use of the information produced in policy processes as well as in education, the media, and publications, among other forums
- Production of relevant, timely and reliable reports from monitoring and assessment in response to policy requirements
- Support at for the maintenance and use of these data and financial resources to sustain data collection over the long term
- Collaboration and coordination among national institutions and organizations
- Involvement of stakeholders in all stages of collection, analysis and reporting of information
- International collaboration.

39. IFF recognized the need to strengthen capacity for national data collection, analysis and reporting on forests, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in order to improve decision-making and policy and programme development. They also identified the need for greater coordination and cooperation within and among countries and with international organizations and instruments for periodic and timely collection, review, synthesis and utilization of forest-related information.[29]

40. Capacity-building on monitoring, assessment and reporting is often addressed as an integral part of national forest programmes. Activities to assist developing countries to build capacities to monitor, assess and report on forests are being undertaken as an integral part of the programmes and projects of members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. In addition to the examples provided in this section, information related to capacity-building on criteria and indicators is provided in document E/CN.18/2004/11. Examples follow.

41. FAO supports national institutions in developing and implementing national forest assessments through training in forest inventory, information management and

assessment methodologies; implementation by national teams of systematic field inventories; and the establishment of national forestry information services, particularly for national forest programme purposes. FAO also assists developing countries and regions through forest sector outlook studies, criteria and indicators processes and strengthening national forest programmes, including through the National Forest Programme Facility.

42. The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) supports the development of national forest statistical information systems and training and field testing of the ITTO Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests. ITTO has conducted seven regional workshops to build members' statistical capacity. Twelve country-level projects in the development of national forest statistical systems have thus far been implemented. ITTO has been conducting national training workshops on the application of the ITTO Criteria and Indicators in its producing member countries. Members are encouraged to undertake their national level reporting to ITTO using the ITTO Criteria and Indicators as well, with a view to facilitating the preparation of the ITTO Report on the state of forest management in the tropics for publication in 2004.

43. Several other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests are actively helping to build national capacity for data collection, processing and reporting and to assist in improving in-country coordination for reporting to different processes and instruments. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change supports capacity-building for information collection, analysis and dissemination for forest-related carbon inventories. The Centre for International Forestry Research plays a significant role in capacity-building through its work on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, including through country-level testing and training. The World Bank supports capacity-strengthening efforts for forest data and information through projects in many countries. The Global Environmental Facility provides funding to strengthen country capacity in the collection, dissemination and analysis of forest information as a component of projects related to biodiversity, climate change and land degradation. The United Nations Development Programme provides technical support to countries for monitoring and reporting progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and helps them to seek financial assistance for the preparation and distribution of the reports. The Special Programme for Developing Countries of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, in collaboration with the Centre for International Forestry Research and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre and in technical cooperation with FAO, organized the expert meeting entitled "Capacity-building for Forest Scientists in Latin America in Criteria and Indicators, Auditing of Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Certification", which was held in Turrialba, Costa Rica in May 2003.

44. With regard to capacity-building in general, a number of countries indicated in their reports to the United Nations Forum on Forests that they had supported training activities related to criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management (see E/CN.18/2004/__) and for carrying out national forest assessments, among other things. Many donor countries gave examples of their support to developing countries for a wide range of activities, including assistance to carry out and publish national forest inventories.

45. A number of recent meetings have made recommendations on strengthening country capacity for forest resources inventories and for monitoring and assessment. These include the expert consultation held in Kotka, Finland, in July 2002,[30] the meeting of national Forest Resources Assessment correspondents[31] and the United Nations Forum on Forests ad hoc expert group on monitoring, assessment and reporting.

46. The ad hoc expert group concluded that meetings and initiatives related to monitoring, assessment and reporting produced several recommendations on capacity-building that warranted the consideration of the Forum. Participants noted that these functions are complex and that those requesting information are not always aware of the challenges their demands place on countries that have limited capacity to respond. Although many developing countries and countries with economies in transition possess the knowledge, they lack the resources to carry out effective monitoring, assessment and reporting. In addition, the expert group felt there was a need to motivate national focal points and to bridge the communication gap between personnel responding to requests and information providers. One way to increase international support for capacity-building to monitor, assess and report on sustainable forest management, including the implementation on IPF/IFF proposals for action, was to include those functions in national development action plans, poverty reduction strategies and national forest programmes.

V. Conclusions

47. **Increased attention is being paid to monitoring, assessment and reporting and to exchanging related experiences. It is widely recognized, however, that these functions are not ends in themselves. The Conference on Environment and Development, the post-Conference forest process through the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the United Nations Forum on Forests, and several country-led initiatives and other meetings have recognized that periodic assessments are essential for carrying out effective long-term planning, detecting problems and signalling the need to make adjustments in policies and programmes, and evaluating the effects of interventions, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The primary goal of forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting is to facilitate informed decision-making within countries, but these are also important for policy deliberations and action at the regional and international levels.**

48. **Despite encouraging developments regarding information collected on forests at all levels, many countries lack basic knowledge about their forests and uses of their resources. Efforts continue to make monitoring, assessment and reporting more cost-effective, efficient and relevant.**

49. **The continued development of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations global Forest Resources Assessment is important in order to provide comprehensive information on forest resources globally, to contribute to decision-making related to sustainable forest management at the regional and global levels, and to help harmonize and streamline forest-related reporting.**

50. **A common information framework for national forest-related reporting to international processes, proposed by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, could facilitate the monitoring and assessment of progress and the drafting of**

reports both at the national and international levels, thereby reducing the reporting burden on countries.

51. Better synergies should be sought between work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests on streamlining forest-related reporting and the work that the United Nations Environment Programme is leading on streamlining national reporting in biodiversity-related conventions.

52. The process to harmonize forest-related definitions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Centre for International Forestry Research, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations and the United Nations Environment Programme, and work on definitions in the global Forest Resources Assessment process are complementary and are gathering momentum. Collaborators and stakeholders, including intergovernmental organizations, country experts, academics, scientists and international non-governmental organizations, are strongly supporting efforts to resolve difficulties associated with forest-related definitions that have posed difficulties to foresters and planners for decades. Such work would merit the endorsement of the United Nations Forum on Forests and could serve as a catalyst for Governments to send consistent messages to different governing bodies on the use of definitions.

53. Most discussions on capacity-building centre on reinforcing technical know-how regarding ways to collect and manage data. The financial resources to sustain data collection over the long term may not be forthcoming if countries are not convinced of the need to maintain these data. Institutional changes required to build capacity and to improve information take time. Thus, a long-term view and long-term planning are necessary. Where forestry forms a relatively small part of the economy, synergies with other sectors or regional collaboration may be needed to mobilize a critical mass of resources for forest information management.

VI. Points for discussion

54. The United Nations Forum on Forests may wish to consider the following points for discussion:

(a) Taking into consideration the outcomes of the recent United Nations Forum on Forests country-led initiatives and other meetings held in Japan, Italy, Guatemala and the Philippines, and noting with appreciation the work of Collaborative Partnership on Forests members on streamlining forest-related reporting and their efforts to keep countries and other stakeholders informed about these activities, the United Nations Forum on Forest may wish to:

(b) Invite Collaborative Partnership on Forests members to strengthen their activities and collaboration at the national level to assist countries to build capacity for forest-related information collection, management, dissemination and reporting on forests, with a view to making monitoring, assessment and reporting more cost-effective, efficient and relevant to decision makers;

(c) Encourage Collaborative Partnership on Forests members to continue to make readily accessible information from national reports,

including through the development of a common information framework for forest-related reporting to international instruments, and to further publicize the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests on streamlining reporting, including to its members' governing bodies;

(d) Urge the member States to provide consistent guidance on monitoring, assessment and reporting to the various international forest-related bodies, with a view to reducing the reporting burden and facilitating the compilation of reports and analyses at the national and international levels;

(e) Urge the member States and invite Collaborative Partnership on Forests members to support and strengthen the definitions harmonization process under way under the Collaborative Partnership on Forests;

(f) Urge governing bodies of Collaborative Partnership on Forests members to take note and take advantage of the work being done on definitions, make wider use of existing definitions, to the extent possible, and to refrain from creating new definitions unless they are justified and created in a manner that permits adjustments or conversions to be made with ease.

Notes

[1] See the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.18/2002/8) and the report of the second session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 22* (E/2002/42), chap. II.B, resolution 2/2.

[2] In its resolution 2000/35, the Economic and Social Council identified monitoring, assessment and reporting as one of the six principal functions of UNFF.

[3] The meeting was hosted by Japan and co-sponsored by Australia, Brazil, Ghana, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Norway and the United States of America, and was held from 5 to 8 November 2001. The report is available in document E/CN.18/2002/12.

[4] This meeting was organized by the Guatemalan Instituto Nacional de Bosques, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Tropical Timber Organization and the Governments of the United States of America and Finland, and was held in Guatemala City, from 3 to 7 February 2003. The report of the meeting is available at http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y8694E/Y8694E00.HTM.

[5] The initiative was hosted by Italy and co-sponsored by Brazil, China, Italy, Japan, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Tropical Timber Organization and the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat, and was held in Viterbo, Italy, from 17 to 20 March 2003. The report is contained in document E/CN.18/2003/9.

[6] The meeting was hosted by the Philippines and organized by the FAO and the ITTO, and held from 2 to 4 March 2004.

[7] See the Collaborative Partnership on Forests web site (http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf) and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Frameworks 2003 (E/CN.18/2003/INF.1) and 2004 (E/CN.18/2004/INF.1) for more information.

[8] At the time of the second session, one expert meeting on harmonizing definitions had been held, in Rome, in January 2002, jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Centre for International Forestry Research, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations and the United Nations Environment Programme. The report is available at http://www.fao.org/forestry/fop/fopw/Climate/climate-e.asp.

[9] For the exact wording of the recommendations, see *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 22* (E/2002/42), chap. II.B, resolution 2/2, sect. E, paras. 1-4.

[10] http://www.fao.org/forestry/fo/fra/index.jsp.

[11] Global Forest Resources Assessments — Linking national and international efforts. Proceedings of the Expert Consultation, held in Kotka, Finland, from 1 to 5 July 2002. See www.fao.org/forestry/fra-kotka4.

[12] Held in Rome, from 10 to 14 March 2003. The report is available at http://www.fao.org/forestry/cofo.

[13] See the report of the training meeting at www.fao.org/forestry/fra.

[14] http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar.

[15] More information may be accessed at the Collaborative Partnership on Forests web site at http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar.

[16] See the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2004, E/CN.18/2004/INF.1.

[17] The reports of the two expert meetings on harmonizing definitions, jointly organized by FAO, IPCC, CIFOR, IUFRO and UNEP, and held in 2002 at FAO headquarters in Rome, are available at http://www.fao.org/forestry/fop/fopw/Climate/climate-e.asp.

[18] The Government-led initiative, entitled "International Meeting on Special Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover", organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran in 1999. The report was submitted at the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (E/CN.17/IFF/2000/7).

[19] The report is available at http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/pdfs/outputs/wpc/recommendations.pdf.

[20] See annex 2 to Vienna Resolution 4, at http://www.mcpfe.org/livingforestsummit/secure/k-tools/phplib/MedienDatenbankView.inc.php?id=199.

[21] A link to the report will be placed on the United Nations Forum on Forests web site (http://www.un.org/esa/forests/) as soon as it is available.

[22] FCCC/CP/2001/13/Add.1.

[23] http://www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/energy/index.jsp?siteId=3281&langId=1.

[24] http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/areas/forest/definitions.asp.

[25] http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/literature/glossary.htm.

[26] http://www.grida.no/climate/ipcc/land_use/305.htm.

[27] http://www.unep-wcmc.org.

[28] http://www.iufro.org.

[29] See E/CN.17/1997/12, para. 115 (c); and E/CN.17/2000/14, para. 17 (a).

[30] Global Forest Resources Assessments — Linking national and international efforts. Proceedings of the Expert consultation, held in Kotka, Finland, from 1 to 5 July 2002. See www.fao.org/forestry/fra-kotka4.

[31] Training of National Correspondents on Assessing and Monitoring of Forest Land use and Changes, Rome, 17 to 21 November 2003, Proceedings. Forest Resources Assessment Working Paper 80. See www.fao.org/forestry/fra.